

# Ben GiaQuinta

## Indiana State Representative, District 80



Summer, 2001

Dear Friends:

The 2001 long session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended with the passage of a new state budget and several other important pieces of legislation. I am pleased we completed our work on time in a bipartisan manner.

The new two-year state budget includes increased funding for education, CHOICE and other important programs while avoiding a general tax increase. The budget also includes funding for several important local projects that are detailed inside this newsletter.

We passed several other laws that will benefit our state in a variety of areas, including health care, education, crime, election reform and environmental protection. We made improvements to our license branch operations and passed legislation that will protect consumers from annoying telephone calls with the establishment of a do-not-call list. I have described many of these new laws in the next few pages.

In addition, you will find a map of our new legislative district. We are required to redraw the district boundaries every 10 years due to population shifts. I welcome those of you who are new to the district and look forward to working with you in the coming months to make Indiana a better place to live.

Please contact my office if you have additional concerns or questions about state government. You may e-mail me at [H80@ai.org](mailto:H80@ai.org) or call toll-free at 1-800-382-9842.

Sincerely,



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### Inside

•The new budget

•New legislation

•District map

•Local funding

# New budget increases school support, local development

Going into the 2001 legislative session, many observers felt that a sluggish economy would make it difficult to enact a biennial state budget without either passing a general tax increase or cutting funding for critical areas like public education. However, the budget bill that became law continues our record of avoiding general tax increases, while providing additional state support to our schools, health care and local projects.

The final version of House Enrolled Act 1001 enables the state to increase support for public schools across Indiana by an average of 3.5 percent each of the next two fiscal years, with minimum guarantees built in to help schools avoid cutting programs and personnel. Funding for higher education was increased by an average of 3.2 percent each year.

## Services and local development

The budget includes additional funding for the CHOICE program that provides in-home care services for the elderly and disabled, as well as Build Indiana Fund support for research and technology, community wastewater and drinking water grants, airport development and improvements to voting systems.

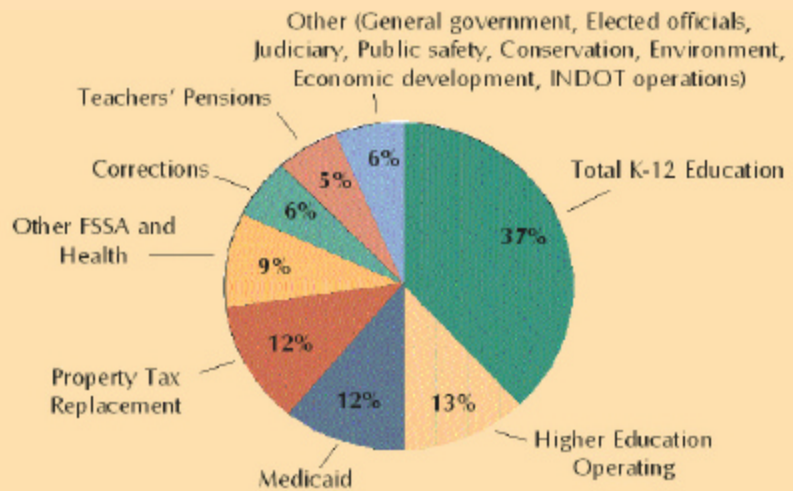
## Tax relief

It was disappointing that we were unable to provide the levels of tax relief that were included in past state budgets, but I am pleased that we were able to extend the life of the homestead credit at 10 percent and maintain the earned income tax credit that assists working families on lower incomes.

Businesses and farms will receive an income tax credit on personal property beginning in 2003, and mobile homes have been changed to be treated as real property with similar deductions. The budget bill continues to fund a statewide property tax relief program that now takes about 16 percent off all property taxes. When coupled with the 10 percent homestead credit, that translates to savings of around 26 percent.

A bill the size of the budget does not contain everything I would like, but considering the fiscal restraints facing legislators going into the 2001 session, I feel this budget is a major accomplishment.

## Spending highlights from the 2001-2003 budget



## Veterans, retirement benefits focus of GiaQuinta legislation



REP. GIAQUINTA  
ADDRESSES THE  
HOUSE.

The needs of the elderly and those who have served in the armed forces are something for which I feel especially responsible as a legislator. That is why I was quite pleased to author House Enrolled Act 1475, which lowers the legal residency requirement for admission to the Indiana Veterans' Home. This new law provides that a person must be a legal resident of Indiana for at least three years, rather than five years, in order to apply for admission to the Home.

This legislation will ensure that our nation's veterans are cared for in the times when they may need it most. Eligible people must be disabled or destitute veterans, and includes all honorably discharged members of the armed forces or nurses who served with the United States and received a service-connected disability. The law extends eligibility to spouses.

Also addressing those who have served, during this legislative session I authored a resolution urging the state of Indiana to fly the POW/MIA flag at the Statehouse and at highway rest stops on Memorial Day, and for a number of days equal to the number of Indiana MIAs from the Vietnam War.

Finally, an amendment which I wrote was passed providing that members of the Public Employee Retirement Fund or the Teacher's Retirement Fund may use up to two years of military service toward their retirement under certain circumstances.





## New laws help revitalize Southtown Mall

Provisions in the state budget and Senate Enrolled Act 457 are bringing a great boost to the revitalization of the Southtown Mall.

Through the financing program contained in the budget, all sales tax revenue collected over a five-year period will be used to help redevelop the mall. It could be used to help demolish and renovate buildings that have problems with asbestos, and to remove underground storage tanks that have the potential to create environmental concerns. Along with the renovations, developers are considering installing a new entrance for the mall to allow easier access from U.S. Highway 27.

SEA 457 allows Southtown Mall to be designated a community revitalization enhancement district (CRED). This provides Allen County with a powerful redevelopment mechanism that will encourage businesses to invest in the district. Each year up to \$1 million of the tax revenue generated in this district will be captured, sent back to the district and invested in redevelopment.

This legislation represents a renaissance and a rebirth of Southtown Mall. Nothing is more valuable than a workable idea like the CRED legislation. What we do for ourselves dies with ourselves, but what we do for the community goes on long after we are gone.

## Improved safety on the roads

For more than a decade, lawmakers have tried to lower the threshold at which drivers are considered under the influence of alcohol from .10 to .08 percent. This year we were finally able to make this change,

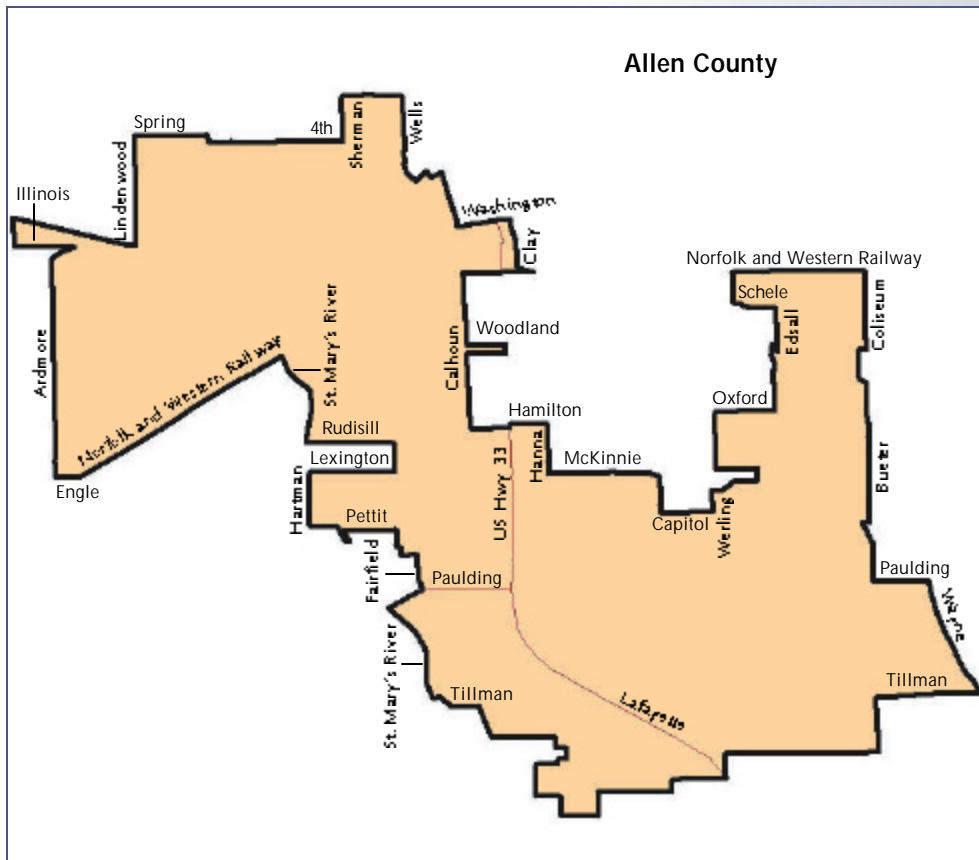


REP. GIA QUINTA WITH LT. GOV. JOE KERNAN.

which went into effect on July 1. While I am pleased with the change, I must note that if Indiana did not make the move to .08, we were at risk of losing federal highway dollars.

Another law impacting drivers addresses violating the speed limit in a construction zone. HEA 1007 makes speeding in a work-site when workers are present a Class B infraction, subject to a maximum fine of \$1,000.

## The new look of District 80



During this year's session you may have heard about redistricting in the news. After each census, the Indiana General Assembly is required by law to redraw House, Senate and Congressional district boundaries according to population changes.

Each district must have 60,000 people, which means that as the population moves to or from various parts of the state, boundaries shift to reflect that change. District boundaries are very complicated, and it took months of effort and debate among legislators to reach a consensus. In the end, however, I feel that the district lines we have drawn are as fair as possible.

For both the current members and those new to the district, I look forward to serving you. Please contact me if you have questions about the district or any other matters.

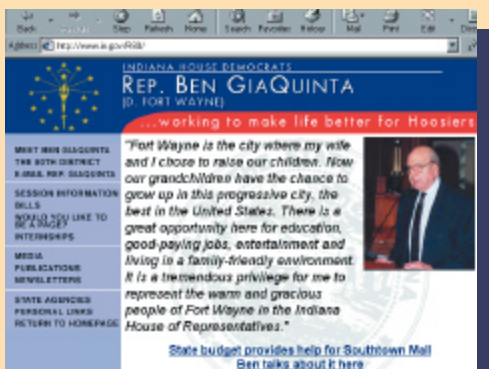


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## Privacy from telemarketers and election reform

Stay informed about these  
and other issues online with  
Representative GiaQuinta



Web: [www.in.gov/R80](http://www.in.gov/R80)

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In 2001, lawmakers took steps to help reduce the interruption of telemarketers calling you at home. Through House Enrolled Act 1222, you will be able to have your name placed on a do-not-call list that will **prohibit most solicitors from contacting you via the telephone**. To be placed on the list, contact the Office of the Indiana Attorney General about the **Telephone Privacy List at 1-888-834-9969**.

In the wake of the confusion that took place in the presidential election in Florida last fall, lawmakers in Indiana moved quickly to enact reforms that will change the way we handle elections here.

Senate Enrolled Act 268 gives counties the ability to enter into agreements with the state to purchase **upgraded voting equipment**. This allows counties to take

advantage of the state's ability to purchase large amounts of equipment and materials at discounted prices. Funds contained in the biennial state budget will help the state provide 50 percent matching grants to further reduce those costs. The same legislation also **eliminates the use of punch-card voting** in future elections.

Through provisions contained in House Enrolled Act 1510, the state has moved closer to improving voter registration in Indiana. The Indiana Election Division will make a **voter registration form available on the Internet** that people can download, fill out and mail in to be processed. The legislation also strives to update lists of eligible voters by removing names of people who are deceased and convicted felons who are in prison.